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The Last Chronicle of Barset

BY

ANTHONY TROLLOPE.

With Illustrations by G.H Thomas

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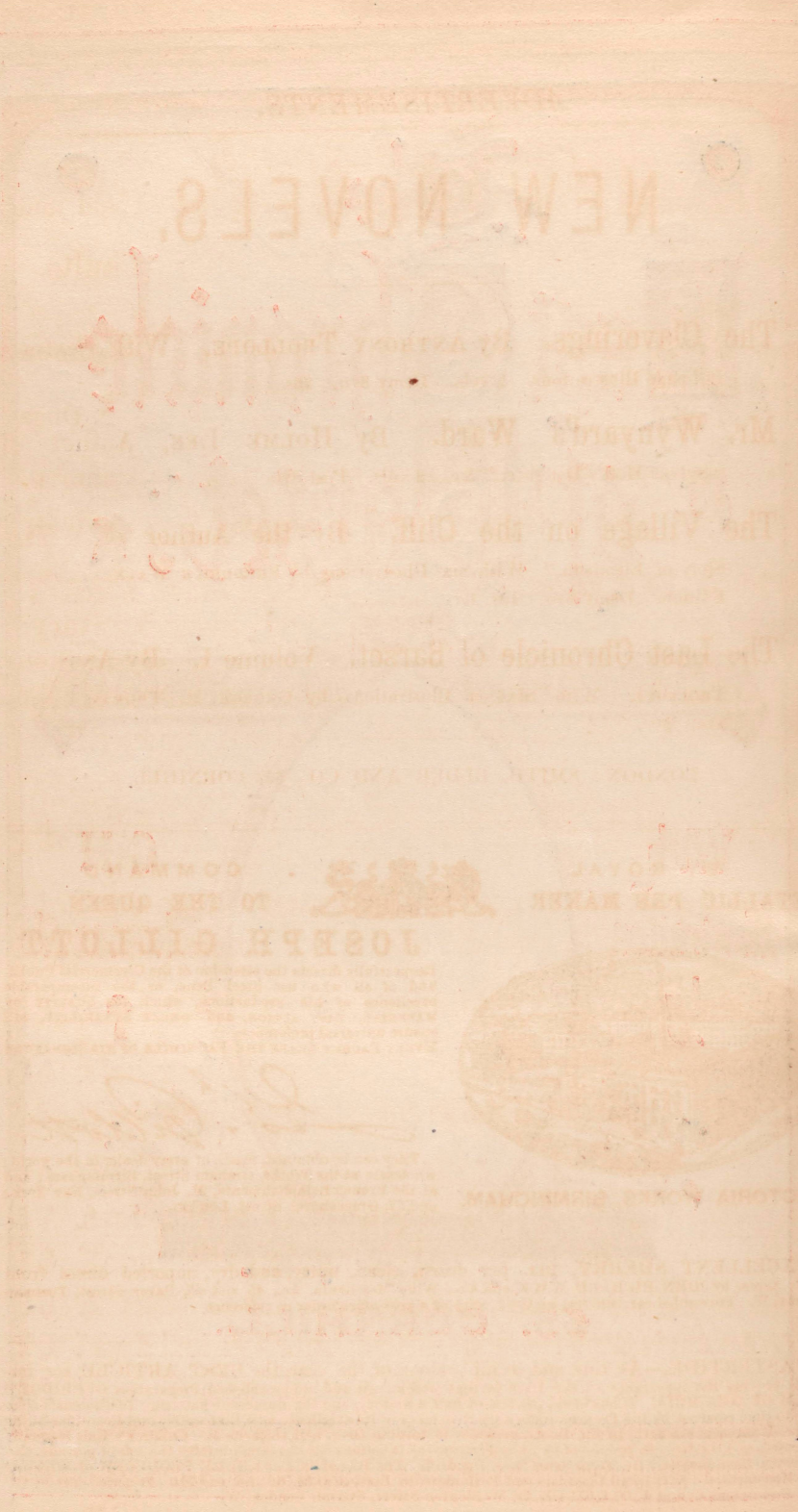

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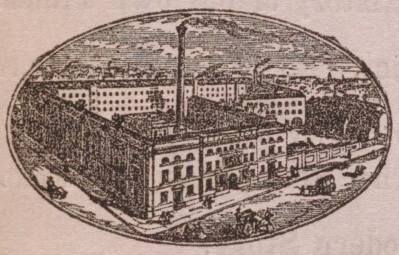

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"But it will never pass away," said Grace.

CHAPTER LVI.

THE ARCHDEACON GOES TO FRAMLEY.

BY some of those unseen telegraphic wires which carry news about the country and make no charge for the conveyance, Archdeacon Grantly heard that his son the major was at Framley. Now in that itself there would have been nothing singular. There had been for years much intimacy between the Lufton family and the Grantly family,—so much that an alliance between the two houses had once been planned, the elders having considered it expedient that the young lord should marry that Griselda who had since mounted higher in the world even than the elders had then projected for her. There had come no such alliance; but the intimacy had not ceased, and there was nothing in itself surprising in the fact that Major Grantly should be staying at Framley Court. But the archdeacon, when he heard the news, bethought him at once of Grace Crawley. Could it be possible that his old friend Lady Lufton,—Lady Lufton whom he had known and trusted all his life, whom he had ever regarded as a pillar of the church in Barsetshire,—should now be untrue to him in a matter so closely affecting his interests? Men when they are worried by fears and teased by adverse circumstances become suspicious of those on whom suspicion should never rest. It was hardly possible, the archdeacon thought, that Lady Lufton should treat him so unworthily,—but the circumstances were strong against his friend. Lady Lufton had induced Miss Crawley to go to Framley, much against his advice, at a time when such a visit seemed to him to be very improper; and it now appeared that his son was to be there at the

same time,—a fact of which Lady Lufton had made no mention to him whatever. Why had not Lady Lufton told him that Henry Grantly was coming to Framley Court? The reader, whose interest in the matter will be less keen than was the archdeacon's, will know very well why Lady Lufton had said nothing about the major's visit. The reader will remember that Lady Lufton, when she saw the archdeacon, was as ignorant as to the intended visit as was the archdeacon himself. But the archdeacon was uneasy, troubled, and suspicious;—and he suspected his old friend unworthily.

He spoke to his wife about it within a very few hours of the arrival of the tidings by those invisible wires. He had already told her that Miss Crawley was to go to Framley parsonage, and that he thought that Mrs. Robarts was wrong to receive her at such a time. "It is only intended for good-nature," Mrs. Grantly had said. "It is misplaced good-nature at the present moment," the archdeacon had replied. Mrs. Grantly had not thought it worth her while to undertake at the moment any strong defence of the Framley people. She knew well how odious was the name of Crawley in her husband's ears, and she felt that the less that was said at present about the Crawleys the better for the peace of the rectory at Plumstead. She had therefore allowed the expression of his disapproval to pass unchallenged. But now he came upon her with a more bitter grievance, and she was obliged to argue the matter with him.

"What do you think?" said he; "Henry is at Framley."

"He can hardly be staying there," said Mrs. Grantly, "because I know that he is so very busy at home." The business at home of which the major's mother was speaking was his projected moving from Cosby Lodge, a subject which was also very odious to the archdeacon. He did not wish his son to move from Cosby Lodge. He could not endure the idea that his son should be known throughout the county to be giving up a residence because he could not afford to keep it. The archdeacon could have afforded to keep up two Cosby Lodges for his son, and would have been well pleased to do so, if only his son would not misbehave against him so shamefully! He could not bear that his son should be punished, openly, before the eyes of all Barsetshire. Indeed he did not wish that his son should be punished at all. He simply desired that his son should recognize his father's power to inflict punishment. It would be henbane to Archdeacon Grantly to have a poor son,—a son living at Pau,—among Frenchmen!—because he could not afford to live in England. Why had the archdeacon been careful of his money, adding house to house and field to field?

He himself was contented,—so he told himself,—to die as he had lived in a country parsonage, working with the collar round his neck up to the day of his death, if God would allow him so to do. He was ambitious of no grandeur for himself. So he would tell himself,—being partly oblivious of certain episodes in his own life. All his wealth had been got together for his children. He desired that his sons should be fitting brothers for their august sister. And now the son who was nearest to him, whom he was bent upon making a squire in his own county, wanted to marry the daughter of a man who had stolen twenty pounds, and when objection was made to so discreditable a connexion, replied by packing up all his things and saying that he would go and live—at Pau! The archdeacon therefore did not like to hear of his son being very busy at home.

"I don't know whether he's busy or not," said the archdeacon, "but I tell you he is staying at Framley."

"From whom have you heard it?"

"What matter does that make if it is so? I heard it from Flurry."

"Flurry may have been mistaken," said Mrs. Grantly.

"It is not at all likely. Those people always know about such things. He heard it from the Framley keeper. I don't doubt but it's true, and I think that it's a great shame."

"A great shame that Henry should be at Framley! He has been there two or three times every year since he has lived in the county."

"It is a great shame that he should be had over there just at the time when that girl is there also. It is impossible to believe that such a thing is an accident."

"But, archdeacon, you do not mean to say that you think that Lady Lufton has arranged it?"

"I don't know who has arranged it. Somebody has arranged it. If it is Robarts, that is almost worse. One could forgive a woman in such a matter better than one could a man."

"Psha!" Mrs. Grantly's temper was never bitter, but at this moment it was not sweetened by her husband's very uncivil reference to her sex. "The whole idea is nonsense, and you should get it out of your head."

"Am I to get it out of my head that Henry wants to make this girl his wife, and that the two are at this moment at Framley together?" In this the archdeacon was wrong as to his facts. Major Grantly had left Framley on the previous day, having stayed there only one night. "It is coming to that that one can trust no one—no one—literally no

one." Mrs. Grantly perfectly understood that the archdeacon, in the agony of the moment, intended to exclude even herself from his confidence by that "no one;" but to this she was indifferent, understanding accurately when his words should be accepted as expressing his thoughts, and when they should be supposed to express only his anger.

"The probability is that no one at Lufton knew anything about Henry's partiality for Miss Crawley," said Mrs. Grantly.

"I tell you I think they are both at Framley together?"

"And I tell you that if they are, which I doubt, they are there simply by an accident. Besides, what does it matter? If they choose to marry each other, you and I cannot prevent them. They don't want any assistance from Lady Lufton, or anybody else. They have simply got to make up their own minds, and then no one can hinder them."

"And, therefore, you would like to see them brought together?"

"I say nothing about that, archdeacon; but I do say that we must take these things as they come. What can we do? Henry may go and stay with Lady Lufton if he pleases. You and I cannot prevent him."

After this the archdeacon walked away, and would not argue the matter any further with his wife at that moment. He knew very well that he could not get the better of her, and was apt at such moments to think that she took an unfair advantage of him by keeping her temper. But he could not get out of his head the idea that perhaps on this very day things were being arranged between his son and Grace Crawley at Framley; and he resolved that he himself would go over and see what might be done. He would, at any rate, tell all his trouble to Lady Lufton, and beg his old friend to assist him. He could not think that such a one as he had always known Lady Lufton to be would approve of a marriage between Henry Grantly and Grace Crawley. At any rate, he would learn the truth. He had once been told that Grace Crawley had herself refused to marry his son, feeling that she would do wrong to inflict so great an injury upon any gentleman. He had not believed in so great a virtue. He could not believe in it now,—now, when he heard that Miss Crawley and his son were staying together in the same parish. Somebody must be doing him an injury. It could hardly be chance. But his presence at Framley might even yet have a good effect, and he would at least learn the truth. So he had himself driven to Barchester, and from Barchester he took post-horses to Framley.

As he came near to the village, he grew to be somewhat ashamed of himself, or, at least, nervous as to the mode in which he would proceed.

The driver, turning round to him, had suggested that he supposed he was to drive to "My lady's." This injustice to Lord Lufton, to whom the house belonged, and with whom his mother lived as a guest, was very common in the county; for old Lady Lufton had lived at Framley Court through her son's long minority, and had kept the house there till his marriage; and even since his marriage she had been recognized as its presiding genius. It certainly was not the fault of old Lady Lufton, as she always spoke of everything as belonging either to her son or to her daughter-in-law. The archdeacon had been in doubt whether he would go to the Court or to the parsonage. Could he have done exactly as he wished, he would have left the chaise and walked to the parsonage, so as to reach it without the noise and fuss incidental to a postilion's arrival. But that was impossible. He could not drop into Framley as though he had come from the clouds, and, therefore, he told the man to do as he had suggested. "To my lady's?" said the postilion. The archdeacon assented, and the man, with loud cracks of his whip, and with a spasmodic gallop along the short avenue, took the archdeacon up to the door of Lord Lufton's house. He asked for Lord Lufton first, putting on his pleasantest smile, so that the servant should not suspect the purpose, of which he was somewhat ashamed. Was Lord Lufton at home? Lord Lufton was not at home. Lord Lufton had gone up to London that morning, intending to return the day after to-morrow; but both my ladies were at home. So the archdeacon was shown into the room where both my ladies were sitting, —and with them he found Mrs. Robarts. Any one who had become acquainted with the habits of the Framley ladies would have known that this might very probably be the case. The archdeacon himself was as well aware as any one of the modes of life at Framley. The lord's wife was the parson's sister, and the parson's wife had from her infancy been the petted friend of the old lady. Of course they all lived very much together. Of course Mrs. Robarts was as much at home in the drawing-room of Framley Court as she was in her own drawing-room at the parsonage. Nevertheless, the archdeacon thought himself to be hardly used when he found that Mrs. Robarts was at the house.

"My dear archdeacon, who ever expected to see you?" said old Lady Lufton. Then the two younger women greeted him. And they all smiled on him pleasantly, and seemed overjoyed to see him. He was, in truth, a great favourite at Framley, and each of the three was glad to welcome him. They believed in the archdeacon at Framley, and felt for him that sort of love which ladies in the country do feel for their elderly male friends. There was not one of the three who

would not have taken much trouble to get anything for the archdeacon which they had thought the archdeacon would like. Even old Lady Lufton remembered what was his favourite soup, and always took care that he should have it when he dined at the Court. Young Lady Lufton would bring his tea to him as he sat in his chair. He was petted in the house, was allowed to poke the fire if he pleased, and called the servants by their names as though he were at home. He was compelled, therefore, to smile and to seem pleased; and it was not till after he had eaten his lunch, and had declared that he must return home to dinner, that the dowager gave him an opportunity of having the private conversation which he desired.

"Can I have a few minutes' talk with you?" he said to her, whispering into her ear as they left the drawing-room together. So she led the way into her own sitting-room, telling him, as she asked him to be seated, that she had supposed that something special must have brought him over to Framley. "I should have asked you to come up here, even if you had not spoken," she said.

"Then perhaps you know what has brought me over?" said the archdeacon.

"Not in the least," said Lady Lufton. "I have not an idea. But I did not flatter myself that you would come so far on a morning call, merely to see us three ladies. I hope you did not want to see Ludovic, because he will not be back till to-morrow?"

"I wanted to see you, Lady Lufton."

"That is lucky, as here I am. You may be pretty sure to find me here any day in the year."

After this there was a little pause. The archdeacon hardly knew how to begin his story. In the first place he was in doubt whether Lady Lufton had ever heard of the preposterous match which his son had proposed to himself to make. In his anger at Plumstead he had felt sure that she knew all about it, and that she was assisting his son. But this belief had dwindled as his anger had dwindled; and as the chaise had entered the parish of Framley he had told himself that it was quite impossible that she should know anything about it. Her manner had certainly been altogether in her favour since he had been in her house. There had been nothing of the consciousness of guilt in her demeanour. But, nevertheless, there was the coincidence! How had it come to pass that Grace Crawley and his son should be at Framley together? It might, indeed, be just possible that Flurry might have been wrong, and that his son had not been there at all.

"I suppose Miss Crawley is at the parsonage?" he said at last.

"Oh, yes; she is still there, and will remain there I should think for the next ten days."

"Oh; I did not know," said the archdeacon very coldly.

It seemed to Lady Lufton, who was as innocent as an unborn babe in the matter of the projected marriage, that her old friend the archdeacon was in a mind to persecute the Crawleys. He had on a former occasion taken upon himself to advise that Grace Crawley should not be entertained at Framley, and now it seemed that he had come all the way from Plumstead to say something further in the same strain. Lady Lufton, if he had anything further to say of that kind, would listen to him as a matter of course. She would listen to him and reply to him without temper. But she did not approve of it. She told herself silently that she could not approve of persecution or of interference. She therefore drew herself up, and pursed her mouth, and put on something of that look of severity which she could assume very visibly, if it so pleased her.

"Yes; she is still there, and I think that her visit will do her a great deal of good," said Lady Lufton.

"When we talk of doing good to people," said the archdeacon, "we often make terrible mistakes. It so often happens that we don't know when we are doing good and when we are doing harm."

"That is true, of course, Dr. Grantly, and must be so necessarily, as our wisdom here below is so very limited. But I should think,—as far as I can see, that is,—that the kindness which my friend Mrs. Robarts is showing to this young lady must be beneficial. You know, archdeacon, I explained to you before that I could not quite agree with you in what you said as to leaving these people alone till after the trial. I thought that help was necessary to them at once."

The archdeacon sighed deeply. He ought to have been somewhat renovated in spirit by the tone in which Lady Lufton spoke to him, as it conveyed to him almost an absolute conviction that his first suspicion was incorrect. But any comfort which might have come to him from this source was marred by the feeling that he must announce his own disgrace. At any rate he must do so, unless he were contented to go back to Plumstead without having learned anything by his journey. He changed the tone of his voice, however, and asked a question,—as it might be altogether on a different subject. "I heard yesterday," he said, "that Henry was over here."

"He was here yesterday. He came the evening before, and dined and slept here, and went home yesterday morning."

"Was Miss Crawley with you that evening?"

"Miss Crawley? No; she would not come. She thinks it best not to go out while her father is in his present unfortunate position; and she is right."

"She is quite right in that," said the archdeacon; and then he paused again. He thought that it would be best for him to make a clean breast of it, and to trust to Lady Lufton's sympathy. "Did Henry go up to the parsonage?" he asked.

But still Lady Lufton did not suspect the truth. "I think he did," she replied, with an air of surprise. "I think I heard that he went up there to call on Mrs. Robarts after breakfast."

"No, Lady Lufton, he did not go up there to call on Mrs. Robarts. He went up there because he is making a fool of himself about that Miss Crawley. That is the truth. Now you understand it all. I hope that Mrs. Robarts does not know it. I do hope for her own sake that Mrs. Robarts does not know it."

The archdeacon certainly had no longer any doubt as to Lady Lufton's innocence when he looked at her face as she heard these tidings. She had predicted that Grace Crawley would "make havoc," and could not, therefore, be altogether surprised at the idea that some gentleman should have fallen in love with her; but she had never supposed that the havoc might be made so early in her days, or on so great a quarry. "You don't mean to tell me that Henry Grantly is in love with Grace Crawley?" she replied.

"I mean to say that he says he is."

"Dear, dear, dear! I'm sure, archdeacon, that you will believe me when I say that I knew nothing about it."

"I am quite sure of that," said the archdeacon dolefully.

"Or I certainly should not have been glad to see him here. But the house, you know, is not mine, Dr. Grantly. I could have done nothing if I had known it. But only to think——; well, to be sure. She has not lost time, at any rate."

Now this was not at all the light in which the archdeacon wished that the matter should be regarded. He had been desirous that Lady Lufton should be horror-stricken by the tidings, but it seemed to him that she regarded the iniquity almost as a good joke. What did it matter how young or how old the girl might be? She came of poor people,—of people who had no friends,—of disgraced people; and Lady Lufton ought to feel that such a marriage would be a terrible misfortune and a terrible crime. "I need hardly tell you, Lady Lufton," said the archdeacon, "that I shall set my face against it as far as it is in my power to do so."

"If they both be resolved I suppose you can hardly prevent it."

"Of course I cannot prevent it. Of course I cannot prevent it. If he will break my heart and his mother's,—and his sister's,—of course I cannot prevent it. If he will ruin himself, he must have his own way."

"Ruin himself, Dr. Grantly!"

"They will have enough to live upon,—somewhere in Spain or France." The scorn expressed in the archdeacon's voice as he spoke of Pau as being "somewhere in Spain or France," should have been heard to be understood. "No doubt they will have enough to live upon."

"Do you mean to say that it will make a difference as to your own property, Dr. Grantly?"

"Certainly it will, Lady Lufton. I told Henry when I first heard of the thing,—before he had definitely made any offer to the girl,—that I should withdraw from him altogether the allowance that I now make him, if he married her. And I told him also, that if he persisted in his folly I should think it my duty to alter my will."

"I am sorry for that, Dr. Grantly."

"Sorry! And am not I sorry? Sorrow is no sufficient word. I am broken-hearted. Lady Lufton, it is killing me. It is indeed. I love him; I love him;—I love him as you have loved your son. But what is the use? What can he be to me when he shall have married the daughter of such a man as that?"

Lady Lufton sat for a while silent, thinking of a certain episode in her own life. There had been a time when her son was desirous of making a marriage which she had thought would break her heart. She had for a time moved heaven and earth,—as far as she knew how to move them,—to prevent the marriage. But at last she had yielded,—not from lack of power, for the circumstances had been such that at the moment of yielding she had still the power in her hand of staying the marriage,—but she had yielded because she had perceived that her son was in earnest. She had yielded, and had kissed the dust; but from the moment in which her lips had so touched the ground, she had taken great joy in the new daughter whom her son had brought into the house. Since that she had learned to think that young people might perhaps be right, and that old people might perhaps be wrong. This trouble of her friend the archdeacon's was very like her own old trouble. "And he is engaged to her now?" she said, when those thoughts had passed through her mind.

"Yes;—that is, no. I am not sure. I do not know how to make myself sure."

"I am sure Major Grantly will tell you all the truth as it exists."

"Yes; he'll tell me the truth,—as far as he knows it. I do not see that there is much anxiety to spare me in the matter. He is desirous rather of making me understand that I have no power of saving him from his own folly. Of course I have no power of saving him."

"But is he engaged to her?"

"He says that she has refused him. But of course that means nothing."

Again the archdeacon's position was very like Lady Lufton's position, as it had existed before her son's marriage. In that case also the young lady, who was now Lady Lufton's own daughter and dearest friend, had refused the lover who proposed to her, although the marriage was so much to her advantage,—loving him, too, the while, with her whole heart, as it was natural to suppose that Grace Crawley might so love her lover. The more she thought of the similarity of the stories, the stronger were her sympathies on the side of poor Grace. Nevertheless, she would comfort her old friend if she knew how; and of course she could not but admit to herself that the match was one which must be a cause of real sorrow to him. "I don't know why her refusal should mean nothing," said Lady Lufton.

"Of course a girl refuses at first,—a girl, I mean, in such circumstances as hers. She can't but feel that more is offered to her than she ought to take, and that she is bound to go through the ceremony of declining. But my anger is not with her, Lady Lufton."

"I do not see how it can be."

"No; it is not with her. If she becomes his wife I trust that I may never see her."

"Oh, Dr. Grantly!"

"I do; I do. How can it be otherwise with me? But I shall have no quarrel with her. With him I must quarrel."

"I do not see why," said Lady Lufton.

"You do not? Does he not set me at defiance?"

"At his age surely a son has a right to marry as he pleases."

"If he took her out of the streets, then it would be the same?" said the archdeacon with bitter anger.

"No;—for such a one would herself be bad."

"Or if she were the daughter of a huxter out of the city?"

"No again;—for in that case her want of education would probably unfit her for your society."

"Her father's disgrace, then, should be a matter of indifference to me, Lady Lufton?"

"I did not say so. In the first place, her father is not disgraced,—not as yet; and we do not know whether he may ever be disgraced. You will hardly be disposed to say that persecution from the palace disgraces a clergyman in Barsetshire."

"All the same, I believe that the man was guilty," said the archdeacon.

"Wait and see, my friend, before you condemn him altogether. But, be that as it may, I acknowledge that the marriage is one which must naturally be distasteful to you."

"Oh, Lady Lufton! if you only knew! If you only knew!"

"I do know; and I feel for you. But I think that your son has a right to expect that you should not show the same repugnance to such a marriage as this as you would have had a right to show had he suggested to himself such a wife as those at which you just now hinted. Of course you can advise him, and make him understand your feelings; but I cannot think you will be justified in quarrelling with him, or in changing your views towards him as regards money, seeing that Miss Crawley is an educated lady, who has done nothing to forfeit your respect." A heavy cloud came upon the archdeacon's brow as he heard these words, but he did not make any immediate answer. "Of course, my friend," continued Lady Lufton, "I should not have ventured to say so much to you, had you not come to me, as it were, for my opinion."

"I came here because I thought Henry was here," said the archdeacon.

"If I have said too much I beg your pardon."

"No; you have not said too much. It is not that. You and I are such old friends that either may say almost anything to the other."

"Yes;—just so. And therefore I have ventured to speak my mind," said Lady Lufton.

"Of course;—and I am obliged to you. But, Lady Lufton, you do not understand yet how this hits me. Everything in life that I have done, I have done for my children. I am wealthy, but I have not used my wealth for myself, because I have desired that they should be able to hold their heads high in the world. All my ambition has been for them, and all the pleasure which I have anticipated for myself in my old age is that which I have hoped to receive from their credit. As for Henry, he might have had anything he wanted from me in the way of money. He expressed a wish, a few months since, to go into Parliament, and I promised to help him as far as ever I could go. I have kept up the game altogether for him. He, the younger son of a

working parish parson, has had everything that could be given to the eldest son of a country gentleman,—more than is given to the eldest son of many a peer. I have hoped that he would marry again, but I have never cared that he should marry for money. I have been willing to do anything for him myself. But, Lady Lufton, a father does feel that he should have some return for all this. No one can imagine that Henry ever supposed that a bride from that wretched place at Hogglestock could be welcomed among us. He knew that he would break our hearts, and he did not care for it. That is what I feel. Of course he has the power to do as he likes;—and of course I have the power to do as I like also with what is my own."

Lady Lufton was a very good woman, devoted to her duties, affectionate and just to those about her, truly religious, and charitable from her nature; but I doubt whether the thorough worldliness of the archdeacon's appeal struck her as it will strike the reader. People are so much more worldly in practice than they are in theory, so much keener after their own gratification in detail than they are in the abstract, that the narrative of many an adventure would shock us, though the same adventure would not shock us in the action. One girl tells another how she has changed her mind in love; and the friend sympathizes with the friend, and perhaps applauds. Had the story been told in print, the friend who had listened with equanimity would have read of such vacillation with indignation. She who vacillated herself would have hated her own performance when brought before her judgment as a matter in which she had no personal interest. Very fine things are written every day about honesty and truth, and men read them with a sort of external conviction that a man, if he be anything of a man at all, is of course honest and true. But when the internal convictions are brought out between two or three who are personally interested together,—between two or three who feel that their little gathering is, so to say, "tiled,"—those internal convictions differ very much from the external convictions. This man, in his confidences, asserts broadly that he does not mean to be thrown over, and that man has a project for throwing over somebody else; and the intention of each is that scruples are not to stand in the way of his success. The "Ruat cœlum, fiat justitia," was said, no doubt, from an outside balcony to a crowd, and the speaker knew that he was talking buncombe. The "Rem, si possis recte, si non, quocunque modo," was whispered into the ear in a club smoking-room, and the whisperer intended that his words should prevail.

Lady Lufton had often heard her friend the archdeacon preach, and

she knew well the high tone which he could take as to the necessity of trusting to our hopes for the future for all our true happiness; and yet she sympathized with him when he told her that he was broken-hearted because his son would take a step which might possibly interfere with his worldly prosperity. Had the archdeacon been preaching about matrimony, he would have recommended young men, in taking wives to themselves, especially to look for young women who feared the Lord. But in talking about his own son's wife, no word as to her eligibility or non-eligibility in this respect escaped his lips. Had he talked on the subject till nightfall no such word would have been spoken. Had any friend of his own, man or woman, in discussing such a matter with him and asking his advice upon it, alluded to the fear of the Lord, the allusion would have been distasteful to him and would have smacked to his palate of hypocrisy. Lady Lufton, who understood as well as any woman what it was to be "tiled" with a friend, took all this in good part. The archdeacon had spoken out of his heart what was in his heart. One of his children had married a marquis. Another might probably become a bishop,—perhaps an archbishop. The third might be a county squire,—high among county squires. But he could only so become by walking warily;—and now he was bent on marrying the penniless daughter of an impoverished half-mad country curate, who was about to be tried for stealing twenty pounds! Lady Lufton, in spite of all her arguments, could not refuse her sympathy to her old friend.

"After all, from what you say, I suppose they are not engaged."

"I do not know," said the archdeacon. "I cannot tell!"

"And what do you wish me to do?"

"Oh,—nothing. I came over, as I said before, because I thought he was here. I think it right, before he has absolutely committed himself, to take every means in my power to make him understand that I shall withdraw from him all pecuniary assistance,—now and for the future."

"My friend, that threat seems to me to be so terrible."

"It is the only power I have left to me."

"But you, who are so affectionate by nature, would never adhere to it."

"I will try. I will do my best to be firm. I will at once put everything beyond my control after my death." The archdeacon, as he uttered these terrible words,—words which were awful to Lady Lufton's ears,—resolved that he would endeavour to nurse his own wrath; but, at the same time, almost hated himself for his own pusil-

lanimity, because he feared that his wrath would die away before he should have availed himself of its heat.

"I would do nothing rash of that kind," said Lady Lufton. "Your object is to prevent the marriage,—not to punish him for it when once he has made it."

"He is not to have his own way in everything, Lady Lufton."

"But you should first try to prevent it."

"What can I do to prevent it?"

Lady Lufton paused for a couple of minutes before she replied. She had a scheme in her head, but it seemed to her to savour of cruelty. And yet at present it was her chief duty to assist her old friend, if any assistance could be given. There could hardly be a doubt that such a marriage as this, of which they were speaking, was in itself an evil. In her case, the case of her son, there had been no question of a trial, of money stolen, of aught that was in truth disgraceful. "I think if I were you, Dr. Grantly," she said, "that I would see the young lady while I was here."

"See her myself?" said the archdeacon. The idea of seeing Grace Crawley himself had, up to this moment, never entered his head.

"I think I would do so."

"I think I will," said the archdeacon, after a pause. Then he got up from his chair. "If I am to do it, I had better do it at once."

"Be gentle with her, my friend." The archdeacon paused again. He certainly had entertained the idea of encountering Miss Crawley with severity rather than gentleness. Lady Lufton rose from her seat, and coming up to him, took one of his hands between her own two. "Be gentle to her," she said. "You have owned that she has done nothing wrong." The archdeacon bowed his head in token of assent and left the room.

Poor Grace Crawley!

CHAPTER LVII.

A DOUBLE PLEDGE.

The archdeacon, as he walked across from the court to the parsonage, was very thoughtful and his steps were very slow. This idea of seeing Miss Crawley herself had been suggested to him suddenly, and he had to determine how he would bear himself towards her, and what he would say to her. Lady Lufton had beseeched him to be gentle with her. Was the mission one in which gentleness would be possible? Must it not be his object to make this young lady understand that she could not be right in desiring to come into his family and share in all his good things when she had got no good things of her own,—nothing but evil things to bring with her? And how could this be properly explained to the young lady in gentle terms? Must he not be round with her, and give her to understand in plain words,—the plainest which he could use,—that she would not get his good things, though she would most certainly impose the burden of all her evil things on the man whom she was proposing to herself as a husband. He remembered very well as he went, that he had been told that Miss Crawley had herself refused the offer, feeling herself to be unfit for the honour tendered to her; but he suspected the sincerity of such a refusal. Calculating in his own mind the unreasonably great advantages which would be conferred on such a young lady as Miss Crawley by a marriage with his son, he declared to himself that any girl must be very wicked indeed who should expect, or even accept, so much more than was her due;—but nevertheless he could not bring himself to believe that any girl, when so tempted, would, in sincerity, decline to commit this great wickedness. If he was to do any good by seeing Miss Crawley, must it not consist in a proper explanation to her of the selfishness, abomination, and altogether damnable blackness of such wickedness as this on the part of a young woman in her circumstances? "Heaven and earth!" he must say, "here are you, without a penny in your pocket, with hardly decent raiment on your back, with a thief for your father, and you think that you are to come and share in all the wealth that the Grantlys have amassed, that you are to have a husband with broad acres, a big house, and game preserves, and become one of a family whose name has never

been touched by a single accusation,—no, not by a suspicion? No;—injustice such as that shall never be done betwixt you and me. You may wring my heart, and you may ruin my son; but the broad acres and the big house, and the game preserves, and the rest of it, shall never be your reward for doing so." How was all that to be told effectively to a young woman in gentle words? And then how was a man in the archdeacon's position to be desirous of gentle words,—gentle words which would not be efficient,—when he knew well in his heart of hearts that he had nothing but his threats on which to depend. He had no more power of disinheriting his own son for such an offence as that contemplated than he had of blowing out his own brains, and he knew that it was so. He was a man incapable of such persistency of wrath against one whom he loved. He was neither cruel enough nor strong enough to do such a thing. He could only threaten to do it, and make what best use he might of threats, whilst threats might be of avail. In spite of all that he had said to his wife, to Lady Lufton, and to himself, he knew very well that if his son did sin in this way he, the father, would forgive the sin of the son.

In going across from the front gate of the Court to the parsonage there was a place where three roads met, and on this spot there stood a finger-post. Round this finger-post there was now pasted a placard, which at once arrested the archdeacon's eye:—"Cosby Lodge—Sale of furniture—Growing crops to be sold on the grounds. Three hunters. A brown gelding warranted for saddle or harness!"—The archdeacon himself had given the brown gelding to his son, as a great treasure.—"Three Alderney cows, two cow-calves, a low phaeton, a gig, two ricks of hay." In this fashion were proclaimed in odious details all those comfortable additions to a gentleman's house in the country, with which the archdeacon was so well acquainted. Only last November he had recommended his son to buy a certain new-invented clod-crusher, and the clod-crusher had of course been bought. The bright blue paint upon it had not as yet given way to the stains of the ordinary farmyard muck and mire;—and here was the clod-crusher advertised for sale! The archdeacon did not want his son to leave Cosby Lodge. He knew well enough that his son need not leave Cosby Lodge. Why had the foolish fellow been in such a hurry with his hideous ill-conditioned advertisements? Gentle! How was he in such circumstances to be gentle? He raised his umbrella and poked angrily at the disgusting notice. The iron ferule caught the paper at a chink in the post, and tore it from the top to the bottom. But what was the use? A horrid ugly bill lying torn in such a spot would attract only more attention

than one fixed to a post. He could not condescend, however, to give to it further attention, but passed on up to the parsonage. Gentle, indeed!

Nevertheless Archdeacon Grantly was a gentleman, and never yet had dealt more harshly with any woman than we have sometimes seen him do with his wife,—when he would say to her an angry word or two with a good deal of marital authority. His wife, who knew well what his angry words were worth, never even suggested to herself that she had cause for complaint on that head. Had she known that the archdeacon was about to undertake such a mission as this which he had now in hand, she would not have warned him to be gentle. She, indeed, would have strongly advised him not to undertake the mission, cautioning him that the young lady would probably get the better of him.

"Grace my dear," said Mrs. Robarts, coming up into the nursery in which Miss Crawley was sitting with the children, "come out here a moment, will you?" Then Grace left the children and went out into the passage. "My dear, there is a gentleman in the drawing-room who asks to see you."

"A gentleman, Mrs. Robarts! What gentleman?" But Grace, though she asked the question, conceived that the gentleman must be Henry Grantly. Her mind did not suggest to her the possibility of any other gentleman coming to see her.

"You must not be surprised, or allow yourself to be frightened."

"Oh, Mrs. Robarts, who is it?"

"It is Major Grantly's father."

"The archdeacon?"

"Yes, dear; Archdeacon Grantly. He is in the drawing-room."

"Must I see him, Mrs. Robarts?"

"Well, Grace,—I think you must. I hardly know how you can refuse. He is an intimate friend of everybody here at Framley."

"What will he say to me?"

"Nay; that I cannot tell. I suppose you know——"

"He has come, no doubt, to bid me have nothing to say to his son. He need not have troubled himself. But he may say what he likes. I am not a coward, and I will go to him."

"Stop a moment, Grace. Come into my room for an instant. The children have pulled your hair about." But, Grace, though she followed Mrs. Robarts into the bedroom, would have nothing done to her hair. She was too proud for that,—and we may say, also, too little confident in any good which such resources might effect on her behalf.

"Never mind about that," she said. "What am I to say to him?" Mrs. Robarts paused before she replied, feeling that the matter was one which required some deliberation. "Tell me what I must say to him?" said Grace, repeating her question.

"I hardly know what your own feelings are, my dear."

"Yes, you do. You do know. If I had all the world to give, I would give it all to Major Grantly."

"Tell him that, then."

"No, I will not tell him that. Never mind about my frock, Mrs. Robarts. I do not care for that. I will tell him that I love his son and his granddaughter too well to injure them. I will tell him nothing else. I might as well go now." Mrs. Robarts, as she looked at Grace, was astonished at the serenity of her face. And yet when her hand was on the drawing-room door Grace hesitated, looked back, and trembled. Mrs. Robarts blew a kiss to her from the stairs; and then the door was opened, and the girl found herself in the presence of the archdeacon. He was standing on the rug, with his back to the fire, and his heavy ecclesiastical hat was placed on the middle of the round table. The hat caught Grace's eye at the moment of her entrance, and she felt that all the thunders of the Church were contained within it. And then the archdeacon himself was so big and so clerical, and so imposing! Her father's aspect was severe, but the severity of her father's face was essentially different from that expressed by the archdeacon. Whatever impression came from her father came from the man himself. There was no outward adornment there; there was, so to say, no wig about Mr. Crawley. Now the archdeacon was not exactly adorned; but he was so thoroughly imbued with high clerical belongings and sacerdotal fitnesses as to appear always as a walking, sitting, or standing impersonation of parsondom. To poor Grace, as she entered the room, he appeared to be an impersonation of parsondom in its severest aspect.

"Miss Crawley, I believe?" said he.

"Yes, sir," said she, curtseying ever so slightly, as she stood before him at some considerable distance.

His first idea was that his son must be indeed a fool if he was going to give up Cosby Lodge and all Barsetshire, and retire to Pau, for so slight and unattractive a creature as he now saw before him. But this idea stayed with him only for a moment. As he continued to gaze at her during the interview he came to perceive that there was very much more than he had perceived at the first glance, and that his son, after all, had had eyes to see, though perhaps not a heart to understand.

"Will you not take a chair?" he said. Then Grace sat down, still at a distance from the archdeacon, and he kept his place upon the rug. He felt that there would be a difficulty in making her feel the full force of his eloquence all across the room; and yet he did not know how to bring himself nearer to her. She became suddenly very important in his eyes, and he was to some extent afraid of her. She was so slight, so meek, so young; and yet there was about her something so beautifully feminine,—and, withal, so like a lady,—that he felt instinctively that he could not attack her with harsh words. Had her lips been full, and her colour high, and had her eyes rolled, had she put forth against him any of that ordinary artillery with which youthful feminine batteries are charged, he would have been ready to rush to the combat. But this girl, about whom his son had gone mad, sat there as passively as though she were conscious of the possession of no artillery. There was not a single gun fired from beneath her eyelids. He knew not why, but he respected his son now more than he had respected him for the last two months;—more, perhaps, than he had ever respected him before. He was as eager as ever against the marriage;—but in thinking of his son in what he said and did after these few first moments of the interview, he ceased to think of him with contempt. The creature before him was a woman who grew in his opinion till he began to feel that she was in truth fit to be the wife of his son—if only she were not a pauper, and the daughter of a mad curate, and, alas! too probably, of a thief. Though his feeling towards the girl was changed, his duty to himself, his family, and his son, was the same as ever, and therefore he began his task.

"Perhaps you had not expected to see me?" he said.

"No, indeed, sir."

"Nor had I intended when I came over here to call on my old friend, Lady Lufton, to come up to this house. But as I knew that you were here, Miss Crawley, I thought that upon the whole it would be better that I should see you." Then he paused as though he expected that Grace would say something; but Grace had nothing to say. "Of course you must understand, Miss Crawley, that I should not venture to speak to you on this subject unless I myself were very closely interested in it." He had not yet said what was the subject, and it was not probable that Grace should give him any assistance by affecting to understand this without direct explanation from him. She sat quite motionless, and did not even aid him by showing by her altered colour that she understood his purpose. "My son has told me," said he, "that he has professed an attachment for you, Miss Crawley."

Then there was another pause, and Grace felt that she was compelled to say something. "Major Grantly has been very good to me," she said, and then she hated herself for having uttered words which were so tame and unwomanly in their spirit. Of course her lover's father would despise her for having so spoken. After all it did not much signify. If he would only despise her and go away, it would perhaps be for the best.

"I do not know about being good," said the archdeacon. "I think he is good. I think he means to be good."

"I am sure he is good," said Grace, warmly.

"You know he has a daughter, Miss Crawley?"

"Oh, yes; I know Edith well."

"Of course his first duty is to her. Is it not? And he owes much to his family. Do you not feel that?"

"Of course I feel it, sir." The poor girl had always heard Dr. Grantly spoken of as the archdeacon, but she did not in the least know what she ought to call him.

"Now, Miss Crawley, pray listen to me; I will speak to you very openly. I must speak to you openly, because it is my duty on my son's behalf—but I will endeavour to speak to you kindly also. Of yourself I have heard nothing but what is favourable, and there is no reason as yet why I should not respect and esteem you." Grace told herself that she would do nothing which ought to forfeit his respect and esteem, but that she did not care two straws whether his respect and esteem were bestowed on her or not. She was striving after something very different from that. "If my son were to marry you, he would greatly injure himself, and would very greatly injure his child." Again he paused. He had told her to listen, and she was resolved that she would listen,—unless he should say something which might make a word from her necessary at the moment. "I do not know whether there does at present exist any engagement between you?"

"There is no engagement, sir."

"I am glad of that,—very glad of it. I do not know whether you are aware that my son is dependent upon me for the greater part of his income. It is so, and as I am so circumstanced with my son, of course I feel the closest possible concern in his future prospects." The archdeacon did not know how to explain clearly why the fact of his making a son an annual allowance should give him a warmer interest in his son's affairs than he might have had had the major been altogether independent of him; but he trusted that Grace would understand this by her own natural lights. "Now, Miss Crawley, of course I cannot

wish to say a word that shall hurt your feelings. But there are reasons——"

"I know," said she, interrupting him. "Papa is accused of stealing money. He did not steal it, but people think he did. And then we are so very poor."

"You do understand me then,—and I feel grateful; I do indeed."

"I don't think our being poor ought to signify a bit," said Grace. "Papa is a gentleman and a clergyman, and mamma is a lady."

"But, my dear——"

"I know I ought not to be your son's wife as long as people think that papa stole the money. If he had stolen it, I ought never to be Major Grantly's wife,—or anybody's wife. I know that very well. And as for Edith,—I would sooner die than do anything that would be bad to her."

The archdeacon had now left the rug, and advanced till he was almost close to the chair on which Grace was sitting. "My dear," he said, "what you say does you very much honour,—very much honour indeed." Now that he was close to her, he could look into her eyes, and he could see the exact form of her features, and could understand, —could not help understanding,—the character of her countenance. It was a noble face, having in it nothing that was poor, nothing that was mean, nothing that was shapeless. It was a face that promised infinite beauty, with a promise that was on the very verge of fulfilment. There was a play about her mouth as she spoke, and a curl in her nostril as the eager words came from her, which almost made the selfish father give way. Why had they not told him that she was such a one as this? Why had not Henry himself spoken of the speciality of her beauty? No man in England knew better than the archdeacon the difference between beauty of one kind and beauty of another kind in a woman's face,—the one beauty, which comes from health and youth and animal spirits, and which belongs to the miller's daughter, and the other beauty, which shows itself in fine lines and a noble spirit,—the beauty which comes from breeding. "What you say does you very much honour indeed," said the archdeacon.

"I should not mind at all about being poor," said Grace.

"No; no; no," said the archdeacon.

"Poor as we are,—and no clergyman, I think, ever was so poor,—I should have done as your son asked me at once, if it had been only that,—because I love him."

"If you love him you will not wish to injure him."

"I will not injure him. Sir, there is my promise." And now as

she spoke she rose from her chair, and standing close to the archdeacon, laid her hand very lightly on the sleeve of his coat. "There is my promise. As long as people say that papa stole the money, I will never marry your son. There."

The archdeacon was still looking down at her, and feeling the slight touch of her fingers, raised his arm a little as though to welcome the pressure. He looked into her eyes, which were turned eagerly towards his, and when doing so was quite sure that the promise would be kept. It would have been sacrilege,—he felt that it would have been sacrilege, —to doubt such a promise. He almost relented. His soft heart, which was never very well under his own control, gave way so far that he was nearly moved to tell her that, on his son's behalf, he acquitted her of the promise. What could any man's son do better than have such a woman for his wife? It would have been of no avail had he made her such offer. The pledge she had given had not been wrung from her by his influence, nor could his influence have availed ought with her towards the alteration of her purpose. It was not the archdeacon who had taught her that it would not be her duty to take disgrace into the house of the man she loved. As he looked down upon her face two tears formed themselves in his eyes, and gradually trickled down his old nose. "My dear," he said, "if this cloud passes away from you, you shall come to us and be my daughter." And thus he also pledged himself. There was a dash of generosity about the man, in spite of his selfishness, which always made him desirous of giving largely to those who gave largely to him. He would fain that his gifts should be the bigger, if it were possible. He longed at this moment to tell her that the dirty cheque should go for nothing. He would have done it, I think, but that it was impossible for him so to speak in her presence of that which moved her so greatly.

He had contrived that her hand should fall from his arm into his grasp, and now for a moment he held it. "You are a good girl," he said—"a dear, dear, good girl. When this cloud had passed away, you shall come to us and be our daughter."

"But it will never pass away," said Grace.

"Let us hope that it may. Let us hope that it may." Then he stooped over her and kissed her, and leaving the room, got out into the hall and thence into the garden, and so away, without saying a word of adieu to Mrs. Robarts.

As he walked across to the Court, whither he was obliged to go, because of his chaise, he was lost in surprise at what had occurred. He had gone to the parsonage, hating the girl, and despising his son. Now,

as he retraced his steps, his feelings were altogether changed. He admired the girl,—and as for his son, even his anger was for the moment altogether gone. He would write to his son at once and implore him to stop the sale. He would tell his son all that had occurred, or rather would make Mrs. Grantly do so. In respect to his son he was quite safe. He thought at that moment that he was safe. There would be no use in hurling further threats at him. If Crawley were found guilty of stealing the money, there was the girl's promise. If he were acquitted, there was his own pledge. He remembered perfectly well that the girl had said more than this,—that she had not confined her assurance to the verdict of a jury, that she had protested that she would not accept Major Grantly's hand as long as people thought that her father had stolen the cheque; but the archdeacon felt that it would be ignoble to hold her closely to her words. The event, according to his ideas of the compact, was to depend upon the verdict of the jury. If the jury should find Mr. Crawley not guilty, all objection on his part to the marriage was to be withdrawn. And he would keep his word! In such case it should be withdrawn.

When he came to the rags of the auctioneer's bill, which he had before torn down with his umbrella, he stopped a moment to consider how he would act at once. In the first place he would tell his son that his threats were withdrawn, and would ask him to remain at Cosby Lodge. He would write the letter as he passed through Barchester, on his way home, so that his son might receive it on the following morning; and he would refer the major to his mother for a full explanation of the circumstances. Those odious bills must be removed from every barn-door and wall in the county. At the present moment his anger against his son was chiefly directed against his ill-judged haste in having put up those ill-omened posters. Then he paused to consider what must be his wish as to the verdict of the jury. He had pledged himself to abide by the verdict, and he could not but have a wish on the subject. Could he desire in his heart that Mr. Crawley should be found guilty? He stood still for a moment thinking of this, and then he walked on, shaking his head. If it might be possible he would have no wish on the subject whatsoever.

"Well!" said Lady Lufton, stopping him in the passage,—"have you seen her?"

"Yes; I have seen her."

"Well?"

"She is a good girl,—a very good girl. I am in a great hurry, and hardly know how to tell you more now."

"You say that she is a good girl?"

"I say that she is a very good girl. An angel could not have behaved better. I will tell you all some day, Lady Lufton, but I can hardly tell you now."

When the archdeacon was gone old Lady Lufton confided to young Lady Lufton her very strong opinion that many months would not be gone by before Grace Crawley would be the mistress of Cosby Lodge. "It will be great promotion," said the old lady, with a little toss of her head.

When Grace was interrogated afterwards by Mrs. Robarts as to what had passed between her and the archdeacon she had very little to say as to the interview. "No, he did not scold me," she replied to an inquiry from her friend. "But he spoke about your engagement?" said Mrs. Robarts. "There is no engagement," said Grace. "But I suppose you acknowledged, my dear, that a future engagement is quite possible?" "I told him, Mrs. Robarts," Grace answered, after hesitating for a moment, "that I would never marry his son as long as papa was suspected by any one in the world of being a thief. And I will keep my word." But she said nothing to Mrs. Robarts of the pledge which the archdeacon had made to her.

The Furnishing of Bed-rooms.

HEAL and SON have observed for some time that it would be advantageous to their Customers to see a much larger selection of Bed-room Furniture than is usually displayed, and that to judge properly of the style and effect of the different descriptions of Furniture it is necessary that each description should be placed in a separate room. They have therefore erected large and additional Show-Rooms, by which they are enabled not only to extend their show of Iron, Brass, and Wood Bedsteads, and Bed-room Furniture, beyond what they believe has ever been attempted, but also to provide several small rooms for the purpose of keeping complete suites of Bed-room Furniture in the different styles.

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